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# ABRAHAM LINCOLN

By

JOSHUA L. CHAMBERLAIN





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SEEN FROM THE FIELD IN  
THE WAR FOR THE UNION

By

GENERAL JOSHUA L. CHAMBERLAIN, U. S. V.

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A Paper read before the  
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# ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

Brevet Major-General JOSHUA L. CHAMBERLAIN.

Great crises in human affairs call out the great in men. They call for great men. This greatness is of quality rather than quantity. It is not intensified selfhood, nor multiplied possessions. It implies extraordinary powers to cope with difficult situations; but it implies still more, high purpose—the intent to turn these powers to the service of man. Its essence is of magnanimity. Some have indeed thought it great to seize occasion in troubled times to aggrandize themselves. And something slavish in the lower instincts of human nature seems to grant their claim. Kings and conquerors have been named “great” because of the magnificence of the servitude they have been able to command, or the vastness of their conquests, or even of the ruin they have wrought.

But true greatness is not in nor of the single self; it is of that larger personality, that shared and sharing life with others, in which, each giving of his best for their betterment, we are greater than ourselves; and self-surrender for the sake of that great belonging, is the true nobility.

The heroes of history are not self-seekers; they are saviors. They give of their strength to the weak, the wronged, the imperilled. Suffering and sacrifice they take on themselves. Summoned by troubles, they have brought more than peace; they have brought better standing and understanding for human aspirations. Their mastery is for truth and right; that is for man. Hence they are revered and beloved through the ages. If we mourn the passing of the heroic age, all the more conspicuous and honored is heroic example, still vouchsafed to ours.

There are crises yet, when powers and susceptibilities of good fevered with blind unrest and trembling for embodiment seem turned to mutual destruction. Happy then the hour when comes the strong spirit, master because holding self to a higher



obedience, the impress of whose character is command. He comes to mould these elemental forces not to his own will, but to their place in the appointed order of the ongoing world. For lack of such men the march of human right has so many times been halted—hence the dire waste of noble endeavor; grandeur of martyrdoms uplifted in vain; high moments of possibility lost to mankind.

There came upon our country, in our day, a crisis, a momentous peril, a maddened strife such as no description can portray, nor simile shadow forth; volcanic eruption, earthquake, overwhelming seas of human force involving in their sweep agonies and destruction such as the catastrophies of Italy never wrought; not merely the measurable material loss, but the immeasurable spiritual cost; the maddened attempt to rend asunder this ordained Union, this People of the United States of America, a government by divine right, if anything on earth can be so. The shock was deep and vast. It was the convulsion of a historic and commissioned people. It was the dissolution of covenants that had held diverse rights and powers in poise; collision of forces correlated to secure unity and order,—now set loose against each other, working destruction. It was more than the conflict of laws, clash of interests, disharmony of ideas and principles. It was the sundering of being; war of self against self; of sphere against sphere in the concentric order of this great composite national life of ours.

For us the aggregate human wisdom had been found wanting. Conventions, Congresses and compromises had failed; the heights of argument, sentiment and eloquence had been scaled in vain; the mighty bond of historic memories, patriotism and christian fellowship had been dissolved in that ferment. Had a committee of wisest men been chosen,—expert doctors of law, medicine and divinity,—nay the twelve apostles themselves been summoned,—to determine what combination of qualities must mark the man who could mount above this storm, make his voice heard amidst these jarring elements, and command the “law of the mind” to prevail over the “law in the members,” they could not have completed their inventory, nor have found the man of such composition.

It was a divine providence which brought forth the man, to execute the divine decree, in a crisis of human history.



It was a strange presentment and personality,—this deliverer this servant and master, this follower and leader of the law;—strange, and not readily accepted of men. Out of the unknown, and by ways that even he knew not, came to this place of power, Abraham Lincoln.

He came mysteriously chosen; not by the custom of hereditary descent, not by the concurrence of his peers, but by the instinctive voice of a predestined people. Called because he was chosen; chosen, because he was already choice. The voice came to him as to the deliverer of old: *“Be strong, and of a good courage, for thou must go with this people unto the land which the Lord hath sworn to their fathers to give them. And thou shalt cause them to inherit it!”*

This one man called to the task. Millions of them could not meet it. He could. The order to be strong and of a good courage came to him because he was that already. There was that in him which this order appealed to and rested on. A weak man could not even receive it.

So, this deliverer of ours. Courtly manners and culture of the schools he did not bring. But moulded and seasoned strength, calm courage, robust sense, he brought; and a heart to humanize it all. His inherent and potential greatness was his power of reason and sense of right, and a magnanimity which regarded the large and long interests of man more than the near and small of self. Strength and courage are much the same; in essence, in action, and in passion,—the ability to bear. These qualities were of the whole man;—mind, heart and will. Intellect keen yet broad; able in both insight and comprehension; taking in at once the details of a situation, and also its unity and larger relations. He knew men in their common aspects, and he knew man in his potential excellence. Courage of will was his: power to face dangers without and within; to resist the pressure of force or of false suggestion; standing to his conviction; firm against minor persuasions; silencing temptation. Courage of the heart; power to resolve, and to endure; to suffer and to wait. His patience was pathetic.

Courage of faith; belief in the empowering force of his obligation. Wise to adjust policies to necessity, he kept sight of his ideal. Amidst mockeries of truth, he was “obedient unto the heavenly vision.” Through the maze of false beacons



and bewildering beckonings, he steered by the star. Above the recalling bugles of disaster and defeat he heard the voice of his consecration, and held it pledge and prophecy. These qualities, coördinated and commanded by wise judgment, and sustained by a peculiar buoyancy of temperament, constituted a personality remarkable, if not solitary, among the great men of our time.

Before this assembly of the Loyal Legion it is natural to consider Abraham Lincoln as he was presented to our observation and experience in the military sphere; not as Chief Executive in the common phrase of ordinary times, but as representative of the nation before the world, and clothed with its power. That is, as Commander-in-Chief of the army and navy of the United States, in an insurrection so vast as to involve nations over the seas. A secondary title might be: The Revelation of the War Powers of the President.

The situation Lincoln confronted was without parallel; in magnitude, in complexity, in consequence. The immediate and pressing object was manifest. To overcome the embattled hostile forces; to quell the rebellion; to restore the honor and authority of the American Union; to preserve the existence of the people of the United States.

But this involved much more. There are no single lines in human affairs. Cross-currents of interest, sentiment and passion confused the motives, embarrassed the movements, and clouded the issues, of this new declaration that this people should be one and free.

Much had to be met that force could not manage; much that sharpest insight and outlook could not foresee. Not only the direct event of battle was involved, but the collateral effects and continuing consequences; the far-reaching interests of a great people yet to be; the interests of related nations, and of humanity itself.

Little experienced in administrative functions and unfamiliar with the art of war, he had to take the chief responsibility in both. He had much to learn, and was willing to learn it. But not in haste. In some matters he came slowly to the execution of his conviction, as possibly to the conviction itself. But his judgments were based on what was sincere in his nature, and large in motive. That he took no counsel from fear is manifest. Evading the assassins hired to waylay his path to the

place of duty, and the no less infamous plots to prevent the counting of the electoral vote and the announcement of his election, he stood up and faced the menacing, cleaving masses in the beleaguered capital.

He chose his cabinet of official advisers in a novel way, and, one might think, hazardous; but it showed the breadth of his patriotism and the courage of his independence. Instead of seeking those of like thinking with himself, or likely to make a unity among themselves on public questions, he called men who were rival candidates or popular in their respective localities; even offering places to distinguished statesmen in Virginia and North Carolina. And Seward, Chase, Cameron, Welles, Bates, Blair and Smith, and afterwards Stanton,—what measure of agreement with him or each other, on any point of public policy, could be expected from a council like this! Most of these men, no doubt, at first thought slightly of him. But he converted or over-awed them all. He went straight on.

He found more trouble in the military sphere. The popular, or political principle of appointment would not work so well here. It took some time and trial to rectify this, and make practical tests of ability the basis. It was unfortunate that it took so long to secure a nominal military chief, who had the soldierly brain and eye and hand to command the confidence of his subordinates as well as of his superiors.

But even among his generals in the field there was a lack of harmony and a redundancy of personality. He had to over-rule this. He was their responsible commander. He made himself their practical adviser. This latter function some of them undertook to make reciprocal. They did not gain much by it. His sharp rejoinders, winged with wit and feathered with humor,—as apposite as unexpected,—stirred the smiles of all but the immediate recipients. But they commanded the sober respect of all, as uncommon lessons of good common sense,—which is also and always good tactics.

We behold him solitary in the arena; surrounded by various antagonists and unsympathising spectators. He had to deal with cabinet, congress, committees, diplomatists, cranks, wiseacres, as well as the embattled enemy on land and sea.

Sorely tried by long delays in the field, he was vexed by the incessant clamor of the excited and unthinking, and of in-



fluent persons and papers that beset him with the demand to free the slaves, and the reckless cry, "On to Richmond," which may have forced campaigns of disaster. Perils from lurking traitors in the capital, pesterings of open or secret enemies and rash and weak advisers, augmented the difficulties of the momentous contention. All the while, with heart-crushing things to bear, which he would not openly notice,—nor let us, now! We cannot but wonder how he ever lived through, to crown his work with a death so tragic, an ascension so transfiguring.

But he was appointed for great ends; and this was his guaranty of life!

Let us note more particularly some of the difficulties which environed the president growing out of the magnitude and exterior complications of this great rebellion.

At first we looked upon the rebellion as a domestic insurrection, to be dealt with by the provisions and processes of municipal law. But facts forced us from that theory. Laws, no less than tactics, change with magnitudes. As the range and force of the rebellion grew, and conditions became more complex, the president had to enlarge his policy, and the grounds of its justification.

One of the first warlike acts of the Confederate States was to send forth armed cruisers, commissioned by "Letters of Marque" to prey upon our merchant-ships and commerce on the seas. We could not treat these cruisers as a domestic insurrectionary force, because they were operating on the "high seas,"—the road of the nations; nor could we treat them as pirates, and apply to their captured crews the summary process of a short rope at the yard-arm, because they were only "domestic enemies," and did not come under the "pirate" definition of international law, as "enemies of mankind." So we had to submit to their enjoying certain privileges recognized by the law of nations, and admit their captured crews to exchange as prisoners of war.

Nor could we treat the armed forces of the rebellion as a "mob," because they were in such force and form that they had to be treated under the laws of war,—presumed to be part of the law of nations. Yet we could not recognize the Confederacy as a nation, and a proper party to such agreement or practice.

Moreover, the president had instituted a blockade of Southern ports, a measure better known to international, than to domestic law. So it came about that the very magnitude of the rebellion, and its extent on land and sea, compelled us, both on grounds of public law and on grounds of humanity, to extend to our formidable antagonists some degree of the regulations known as "belligerent rights." But belligerents are presumed, in law at least, to be aliens to each other; not fellow-citizens. Hence great perplexity for the president.

But the situation now affected other nations. Here opens a painful chapter of that sad experience. And I have to ask your attention for a moment to difficulties outside the domestic sphere, which from the very first to the very last, were among the most trying of the president's experiences. He was confronted by an exterior circle of hostile intent and action in the strange unfriendliness of nations,—perhaps I should say, governments of nations,—historically and racially nearest to us, and professing principles and sentiments deeply accordant with our own.

The governments of England and France did not wait for a distinct good understanding upon international relations. They took the earliest possible occasion to declare their neutrality, and to put the insurgents on the full footing of lawful belligerents. They even denominated them as "States," thus ignoring their character as insurgents. This was the more trying because early in the discussion of the situation, our Government had distinctly declared to the British Government that "No proposition would be considered which did not regard this as a domestic insurrection, with which foreign nations had no concern."

This recognition by England and France, followed by other governments, gave the Confederate cruisers wide privileges on the "high seas," and in foreign ports, and a certain prestige to the Confederate claim before the world,

Then came the severe trial for the president when Captain Wilkes of our navy took from an English steamer on the high seas Messieurs Mason and Slidell,—diplomatic agents of the Confederacy for France and England,—and conveyed them to Boston in custody; our Secretary of the Navy officially congratulating Wilkes, and the House of Representatives voting him the thanks of Congress; the British Government in a rage; Lord Russell in



imperious tones demanding an apology, the instant delivery of Mason and Slidell, and the dismissal of Wilkes from our service; forthwith embarking troops for Canada, and gathering vast munitions of war; engaging the whole power of the Empire to enforce his demand if it was not instantly obeyed. The wisdom and moral strength with which the president met this most difficult situation,—yielding in a manner appeasing England and not humiliating to our Country,—is of highest example.

Then during all the years of the war, England permitted the building and equipping within her jurisdiction and territory of ships intended as Confederate cruisers, and for the known purpose of warring upon the commerce of the United States. This went on in disregard of every protest, until the end of the war, we were in a position to ask England to consider the question of damages; and a Board of Arbitration awarded as a minimum, fifteen millions of dollars. Had the decision been otherwise, and England sustained, we probably could have borne it. But England, in case of a rebellion in some of her dependencies, would have been astonished at the fleets of rebel cruisers investigating her commerce on all seas.

At best, France and England were reluctant and perfunctory observers of neutrality, and anything but cordial well-wishers. All the while they were eager for a pretence of reason to recognize the independence of the Confederate States.

It was believed by us all in the army marching to the unknown field predestined to be immortal Gettysburg, that upon the issue of this battle hung the fate of the nation; that should Lee's army gain a decided advantage here, these two governments would seize the moment to declare the independent sovereignty of the Confederate States, and accord such recognition and support as would bring the end of our great endeavor. You may well believe that this conviction had part in the superhuman marching and fighting which made that a field of deathless glory. It gave us new devotion. It seemed to lift the whole scene and scale of the contention to a higher plane. We were fighting not only forces in the field, but with spiritual foes in high places, with "the princes of the powers of the air."

A serious flank-movement, which gave the president much anxiety, was the occupation of Mexico by the French Emperor. After various vexing schemes, he chose the darkest hour for

that Republic and ours, to send a French army to force a monarchy, with an Austrian arch-duke as Emperor, on the people of Mexico. Besides the direct effect on us, this scheme of planting a hostile monarchical power on our southern border, had an ulterior motive,—to gain a vantage ground from which, by some turn of tangled affairs, to recover a hold on the old Louisiana tract, and the control of the lower Mississippi. In his eagerness Louis over-reached himself. His formal proposal to the Confederates to cede to him, in the name of France, the great State of Texas, angered them, and lost him the game. But he kept his army in Mexico, fighting its people, with Maximilian as nominal head, or catapult, and under the increasing remonstrance of our far-sighted president.

Some of us remember, at the disbandment of the Army of the Potomac, being retained in the service and assigned to a mysterious Provisional Corps of veterans; the intent and mission of which, we were confidentially informed, was to go down with Sheridan to assist Louis Napoleon to get his French army out of Mexico. A personal reconnoissance of Sheridan in Mexico, and the virile diplomacy of Seward, deprived us of that outing. The French army with its monarchy vanished from the shores of Mexico, leaving a stain on the pride of France and a fearful fate for Maximilian and poor Carlotta.

Contemplate for a moment, what would have been the situation, if in any event, Louis had got his foothold in Louisiana under color of title; and what the task might have been for either the North or the South, or both together, to recover that holding and the control of the mighty Mississippi, sea-road for the commerce of half our Atlantic slope.

Let us now take a closer view, and consider the great embarrassments of the president in treating a domestic insurrection under the laws of war; when compelled to use the military forces of the nation, not in aid of the civil authority, and under its regulation, as in common cases, but to replace and supersede it.

In spirit war and law are opposed: the end of one is the beginning of the other. Still, upon occasion, they are made reciprocally supporting. War is brought to support law, and law is applied to regulate war. An armed rebellion is war, and all its consequences are involved. We did not realize this



at first. Military force in time of war stands on a very different basis from that when it is called to the aid of the civil authority. The strict limitations in the latter case are much relaxed; indeed quite replaced. Military law regulates the conduct of armies, and is prescribed by the civil authority. Martial law is something beyond this; it is the arbitrary will of the commander, and operates upon civilians and citizens. This justifies itself by "necessity," which, it is said, "knows no law." So things have to be done which in time of peace are illegal; yet are justified by the inherent law of sovereignty,—the law of life.

I shall not attempt to enumerate all the consequences involved in the operation of belligerent rights. By the law of nations strictly speaking provinces or communities in revolt have no rights. Concessions to such are not made on their account, but from considerations of policy on the part of the dominant state, or of humanity.

Some of the privileges granted to recognized belligerents are well known; such as flags and passages of truce for occasions of need or mercy; exchange of prisoners; immunity of hospitals and perhaps of homes. But on the other hand, and for the larger range, there are corresponding liabilities involved in these "rights," and of a most serious nature. They follow the right to capture, confiscate and destroy enemy's property; to arrest, capture and imprison persons of the enemy; to employ and emancipate slaves of the enemy; to suspend or reduce civil and political rights of a community brought under the jurisdiction of arms, leaving them only the rights of a conquered territory under the laws of war.

This would seem to be enough to task the best ability and conscience in any case. But in a case of intensified and enlarged domestic insurrection, where the insurgents are claiming independent sovereign capacity, denied and resisted by the parent people, which on the other hand regards them as rightly and in fact part of itself,—how to concede belligerent rights and yet avoid acknowledgment of the competency of the antagonist to be a party to the agreement, is a task for tact and wisdom of no common order. And the necessity of applying the laws of war to fellow citizens must bring grievous problems to the head and heart.

Practical questions also were forced upon the president, beyond

the sphere of ordinary peace or war, for the determination of which there was no precedent, nor certain warrant. Questions of statesmanship, of political ethics, and constitutional interpretation, such as kept our Congress and Supreme Court busy for years afterwards, had to be acted on practically and promptly by him.

He took to himself no credit for anything. After years of the struggle and many dark and discouraging aspects of the issue, just before the yet darker depths of the terrible campaign of '64, he writes this self-abasing sentence: "I claim not to have controlled events; but confess that events have controlled me." We can judge better about that, perhaps, than he could, enveloped in the mesh of circumstance. We know how disturbed were the polarities of compelling forces, and how firm the guidance, how consummate the mastery. To our eyes he sat high above the tumult, watching events, meeting them, turning them to serve the great purpose. So far and so far only, did events control him.

He felt himself upborne by the power of his obligation, as charged with a duty like that of the Roman consul: "to see to it that the Republic suffered no detriment." The rule of such emergency is that,—also Roman,—which constitutions involve but do not enunciate, warrantable only in the last extremity: "*Salus populi, suprema lex.*" The salvation of the people is supreme law!

Take the instance of the Emancipation Proclamation. I remember well that many high officers of our army disapproved this in heart and mind, if they dared not in speech. They thought the president had no right to proclaim this intention nor power to carry it into effect. But they had not deeply enough studied the implications of the constitution of their country, or those of the laws of war. They had to take a post-graduate course in their own profession. Indeed, upon political matters the habitual thought of us all was related to a condition of domestic peace, and did not contemplate war at the center of life.

So our Congress, just before the breaking out of the rebellion, in the hope to avoid war and to save the Union, had unanimously passed a resolution that "neither the Federal government nor the free States had any right to legislate upon or in-



terfere with slavery in any of the slave-holding States of the Union." This seems more like an utterance under duress, than a deliberate interpretation of the Constitution. They did not foresee the construction as well as the destruction involved in war.

Even for the president there was a progressive revelation. At his inauguration he had publicly affirmed that he had no intention, directly or indirectly, of interfering with the institution of slavery in the States where it existed. "I believe I have not the right, and I am sure I have not the desire," he adds. He was then viewing the matter under the precedents of peaceful times. The deep reach of his constitutional powers in time of supreme peril of the Country had not been brought to light as it was under the tremendous tests of a vast and devastating war. It came to him but slowly. He seemed reluctant to avail himself of it. Later we find him saying in effect: "My purpose is to save this Union. I will save it without slavery, if I can; with slavery, if I must."

When in the course of events the war-powers of the president emerged, they appeared with a content and extent not dreamed of before. He took them to a high tribunal. He almost made a covenant with God that if the terrible blow threatening the life of the country was broken at Antietam, he would emancipate the slaves in the territory of the rebellion. The thought was not new. The laws of war gave to commanders in the field the right to break down all the forces supporting the enemy; and two of his generals had declared the freedom of the slaves within their military jurisdiction. He promptly rebuked them and countermanded their proclamations. This was not work for a subordinate. So grave, so deep-reaching, so far-reaching, were its necessary effects, he reserved the prerogative for the chief commander and the last resort.

This was not because of immaturity of purpose, nor fear to act; but because he chose to wait until the terrible sufferings and cost of war made this measure seem a mitigation, and the right and necessity of it so clear that the Country and the world must acquiesce. He did this, not because slavery was the *cause* of the war, but because it was a *muniment of war* waged against the life of the people. He set the appointed time and conditions when, within the territory of the rebellion, the slaves should be

freed. The time came,—and the proclamation, deep with thought as with consequence. This, the conclusion:

“And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution, upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind, and the gracious favor of Almighty God!”

Observe the grounds of this: Justice, the eternal law of righteousness; political right, warrant of the constitution; military necessity, for the salvation of the people; the approving judgment of man; the confirmation of God. This justification of the act was the revelation of the man. Without precedent of authority, or parallel in history, but as it were, “*sub specie eterni*”—in the aspect of the infinite, he spoke freedom to the slave! That voice was of the ever-coming “Word” that works God’s will in His World!

Lo! this the outcome of belligerent rights, and the wilful appeal to the arbitrament of arms! Astounding annunciation of the powers of the president for the people’s defence; and the discovery that not only military law, but also the absolute authority and summary processes of martial law, are part of the Constitution, part of the supreme law of the land. Had the leaders in the arrogant pretension of self-sufficiency and the frenzied rush to war, understood the reach of this, they would have hesitated to commit their cause to the wager of battle. And any future plotter against the nation’s integrity and truth, may well pause before waking that slumbering lion at the gates of her life!

It was, indeed, a “domestic problem” which Lincoln had before him,—a wide one, and a far one,—to save his country. We think it was worth saving. The world thinks so, too!

An outcome of Lincoln’s heart and mind was the projection into military law of a deep and wide humanity. We well knew his sympathy and tenderness towards the young soldier and the all-surrendering mother. He often superseded the death sentence for sleeping on post, pronounced upon the new-coming youth unseasoned by discipline and the habit of hardship.

All the lessons drawn from that stern experience of his, are embodied in the famous General Order Number 100, published to the army in 1863.

It was a reconstruction, a regeneration, of the rules of war.



The necessity of stern justice and rigorous discipline recognized; but all tempered by great-hearted recognition of the manhood of man! The notable thing about this is, that it has been adopted, word for word, by nation after nation, and is to-day part of the international law of the civilized world.

And the power of this nation's influence in the world to-day,—the reason why her intervention sets free an oppressed people, her word speaks peace to embattled nations, and her wish prevents the dismemberment of empires,—is not so much in the might of her fleets and armies, splendid as these are, but because of her character, the confidence of the nations in her justice, and truth, and honor! Look at her! Her mission is peace and light and liberty! Her flag speaks hope to man!

Who can tell what part in all this is Abraham Lincoln!

I would speak now of him as he was seen and known more intimately by the army in the field. We had often opportunity to see him,—for some occasions, too often. Sometimes he came for conference with commanders amidst actual conditions, where he could see for himself, and not through casual or official reports. Sometimes, from conferences with cabinet, or Congressmen, or ministers of other powers, holding suggestions of deep import.

But always after a great battle, and especially disaster, we were sure to see him, slow riding through camp, with outward or inward-searching eyes,—questioning and answering heart. His figure was striking; stature and bearing uncommon and commanding. The slight stoop of the shoulders, an attitude of habitual in-wrapped thought, not of weakness, of any sort. His features, strong; if homely, then because standing for rugged truth. In his deep, over-shadowed eyes, a look as from the innermost of things. Over all this would come at times a play, or pathos, of expression in which his deeper personality outshone. His voice was rich; its modulations, musical; his words most fitting.

I have scarcely seen picture or sculpture which does him justice. The swarm of caricaturists with their various motives and instructions, have given a very wrong impression of him,—unfortunately too lasting. There was something of him,—and the greatest and most characteristic,—which refused to be imaged in earthly form.

In his action there was a gravity and moderation which the trivial might misinterpret as awkwardness, but which came from the dignity of reserved power. Those who thought to smile when that figure,—mounting, with the tall hat, to near seven feet,—was to be set on a spirited horse for a ceremonial excursion, were turned to admiration at the easy mastery he showed; and the young-staff game of testing civilians by touching up the horses to headlong speed returning over a course they had mischievously laid, with sudden crossings of old rifle-pit and ditch, proved a *boomerang* for them, when he would come out the only rider square in his saddle, with head level and rightly crowned.

In familiar intercourse he was courteous and kindly. He seemed to find rest in giving way to a strain of humor that was in him. On a moot question, his good story, sharp with apt analogy, was likely to close the discussion,—sometimes at the expense of a venturesome proposer. There was a roll of mischief in his eye, which eased the situation.

We were glad to see that facility of counterpoise in him; for we knew too deeply well, the burden that was even then pressing on his spirit, and our laughter was light and brief.

But always he wished to see the army together. This had a being, a place, a power, beyond the aggregate of its individual units. A review was therefore held, in completeness and most careful order. Slowly he rode along front and rear of the opened ranks, that he might see all sides of things as they were. Every horse was scanned: that is one way to know the master. We could see the deep sadness in his face, and feel the burden on his heart, thinking of his great commission to save this people, and knowing that he could do this no otherwise than as he had been doing,—by and through the manliness of these men,—the valor, the steadfastness, the loyalty, the devotion, the sufferings and thousand deaths, of those into whose eyes his were looking. How he shrunk from the costly sacrifice we could see; and we took him into our hearts with answering sympathy, and gave him our pity in return.

There came a day of offering, not of his appointing. His day came; and a shroud of darkness fell on us. The surrender was over; the all-commanding cause triumphant. Lee's army had ceased to be. That solid phalanx we had faced through years



of mortal struggle, had vanished as into air. The arms that had poured storms of death upon us, had been laid at our feet. The flags that had marked the path of that manly valor which gave them a glory beyond their creed, had been furled forever. The men who in the inscrutable workings of the human will had struck against the flag that stood for their own best good, were returning to restore their homes and citizenship in a regenerated country.

We were two days out from Appomattox,—a strange vacancy before our eyes; a silent joy in our hearts. Suddenly a foam-flecked, mud-splashed rider hands a telegram. No darkest hour of the dismal years ever brought such message. "*The President assassinated! Deep plots at the Capital!*" How dare to let the men know of this? Who could restrain the indignation, the agony, the frenzy of revenge? Whether they would turn to the destruction of every remnant and token of the rebellion around them, or rush to the rescue of Washington and vengeance upon the whole brood of assassins, was the alternative question. We marched and bivouacked with a double guard on our troops, and with guarded words.

Two days after, came from the War Department the order to halt the march and hold all still, while the funeral farewell was passing at the capital. Then why not for us a funeral? For the shadow of him was to pass before us that day, and we would review him!

The veterans of terrible campaigns, the flushed faces from Appomattox, the burning hearts turned homewards, mighty memories and quenchless love held innermost;—these were gathered and formed in great open square,—the battered flags brought to the front of each regiment; the bright arms stacked in line behind them; sword-hilts wreathed in crape; chief officers of the Corps on a platform of army-chests at the open face of the square,—their storied flags draped and clustered in significant escutcheon. The commander of the Division presiding,—the senior chaplain called beside him. The boom of the great minute-guns beats against our hearts; the deep tones echoing their story of the years. Catching the last note of the cannon-boom, strikes in the soulful German band, with that wondrous "Russian Hymn" whose music we knew so well:

“God the All-terrible; Thou who ordainest  
Thunder Thy clarion, and lightning Thy sword!”

that overmastering flood of whelming chords, with the breath-stilling chromatic cadences, as if to prepare us for whatever life or death could bring.

A few words from the commander, and the warm Irish heart of the chaplain wings its eloquence through the hearts of that deep-experienced, stern, loving, remembering, impressionable assembly. Well that the commander was there, to check the flaming orator! Men could not bear it. You could not, were I able to repeat it here. His text was thrilling: “And she, being instructed of her mother, said: ‘Give me here the head of John the Baptist in a charger!’” Then the application. Lincoln struck down because so high in innocence, in integrity, in truth, in loyalty, in fidelity to the people. Then the love he bore to them, and they to him; that communion of sorrows, that brotherhood of suffering, that made them one with him in soul. Then the dastard hand that had struck him down in the midst of acts of mercy, and words of great-hearted charity and good will. The spirit of hate, that struck at his life, was the spirit that struck at the life of the people.

“*And will you endure this sacrilege,*” he cried. “*Will you not rather sweep such a spirit out of the land forever, and cast it, root and branch, into everlasting burning!*” Men’s faces flushed and paled. Their muscles trembled. I saw them grasp as for their stacked muskets,—instinctively, from habit, not knowing what else, or what, to do. The speaker stopped. He stood transfixed. I seized his arm. “*Father Egan, you must not stop! Turn this excitement to some good!*” “*I will,*” he whispers. Then, lifting his arm full height, he brought it down with a tremendous sweep, as if to gather in the whole quivering circle before him, and went on. “*But better so! Better to die glorious, than to live infamous! Better to be buried beneath a nation’s tears, than to walk the earth guilty of a nation’s blood! Better,—thousand-fold, forever better, Lincoln dead, than Davis living!*”

Then admonished of the passion he was again arousing, he passed to an exhortation that rose into a prayer; then to a paean of victory; and with an oath of new consecration to the undying



cause of freedom and right, he gave us back to ourselves, better soldiers, and better men.

That was our apotheosis of Lincoln. He passed up through the dark gate we knew so well. And now when the eyes that were wont to see him in earthly limitations, behold him high amidst the deathless ranks marshalled on the other shore, he stands in unfolded grandeur. Solitary on earth; mightily companioned, there!

He stands, too, upon the earth:

“As some tall cliff that lifts its awful form,  
Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm;  
Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,  
Eternal sunshine settles on its head!”

His magnanimity has touched the answering heart of the chivalrous South. To day, all do him reverence.

There he stands,—like the Christ of the Andes—reconciler of the divided!

And more than this. A true fame grows. Contemporary antagonisms fall away. Prejudice and misconception are effaced by better knowledge. The pure purpose is revealed under broader lights. The unforeseen, far-reaching good effects are more and more acknowledged. The horizon widens; the image lifts. Land after land, year after year; nay,—century upon century, recognize the benefactor as they come to realize the benefaction.

So, more and more for the Country's well-being, will sound the symphony of that deep-themed second Inaugural, majestic as the second giving of the law; and that Gettysburg speech, from his open heart, glorious with devotion, sublime with prophecy. Beyond the facts which history can record,—the deliverance and vindication of a people in peril of its honor and its life, and the revelation of the stored-up powers vouchsafed to him who is charged with the salvation of his country,—there will be for this man an ever unfolding record.

More and more the consecrating oath of that great purpose: “*With malice towards none; with charity for all; following the right, as God gives us to see the right,*” will be the watch-word

of the world. Coming time will carry forward this great example of the consecration of power, self-commanding, and so all-commanding, for the well-being of the people, and the worth of man as man. This example, lifted up before the nations, support and signal of the immortal endeavor,—the human return to God!

So we look forward, and not backward, for the place of Abraham Lincoln!









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